



World Refugee Day 2019: Urging the U.S. to Reaffirm Its Commitment to Refugee Protection & Resettlement

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The Power of Advocacy

On Thursday, June 20th - and throughout the month of June - we join people across the United States to celebrate the courage and resilience of refugees, recognizing the hardships they have faced, the new lives they have created, and the positive impact they have on U.S. communities. We also mourn with the families who remain separated and individuals who are in life-threatening situations while they wait to be resettled, a wait that has grown exponentially longer due to the current administration's policies. While the United States has been a leader in resettling refugees, the administration has dismantled the U.S. refugee resettlement program by 75% in the face of the worst refugee crisis in history. As refugees and friends of refugees, we know the challenges newcomers face are greater than ever and that we must rally in support of preserving the resettlement program and promoting policies that help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States.

What is Advocacy?

Effective advocacy lifts up the voices of refugees and allies to change hearts and minds, including those of policy makers and people in power. Advocacy includes activities like public education, relationship-building with policy makers, civic engagement, voter registration, and media outreach. Advocacy can lead to systemic, lasting, positive changes that help all people thrive in their communities. It is critical that we build bipartisan support for refugees by working with policy makers from both parties.

Who You Are. Why You Care. What You Want.

Your story as a refugee or supporter of refugee resettlement is your most important qualification as an advocate. Developing relationships with and educating policy makers are necessary to see welcoming policies and attitudes towards refugees. It is important that policy makers understand that their constituents care about refugees, and that refugees are their constituents — they live, work, and contribute in their communities, obtain U.S. citizenship, and vote. Talk with policy makers about the way your community welcomes refugees and the positive contributions refugees make to your community, and urge them to support refugee resettlement.

Engaging Elected Leaders

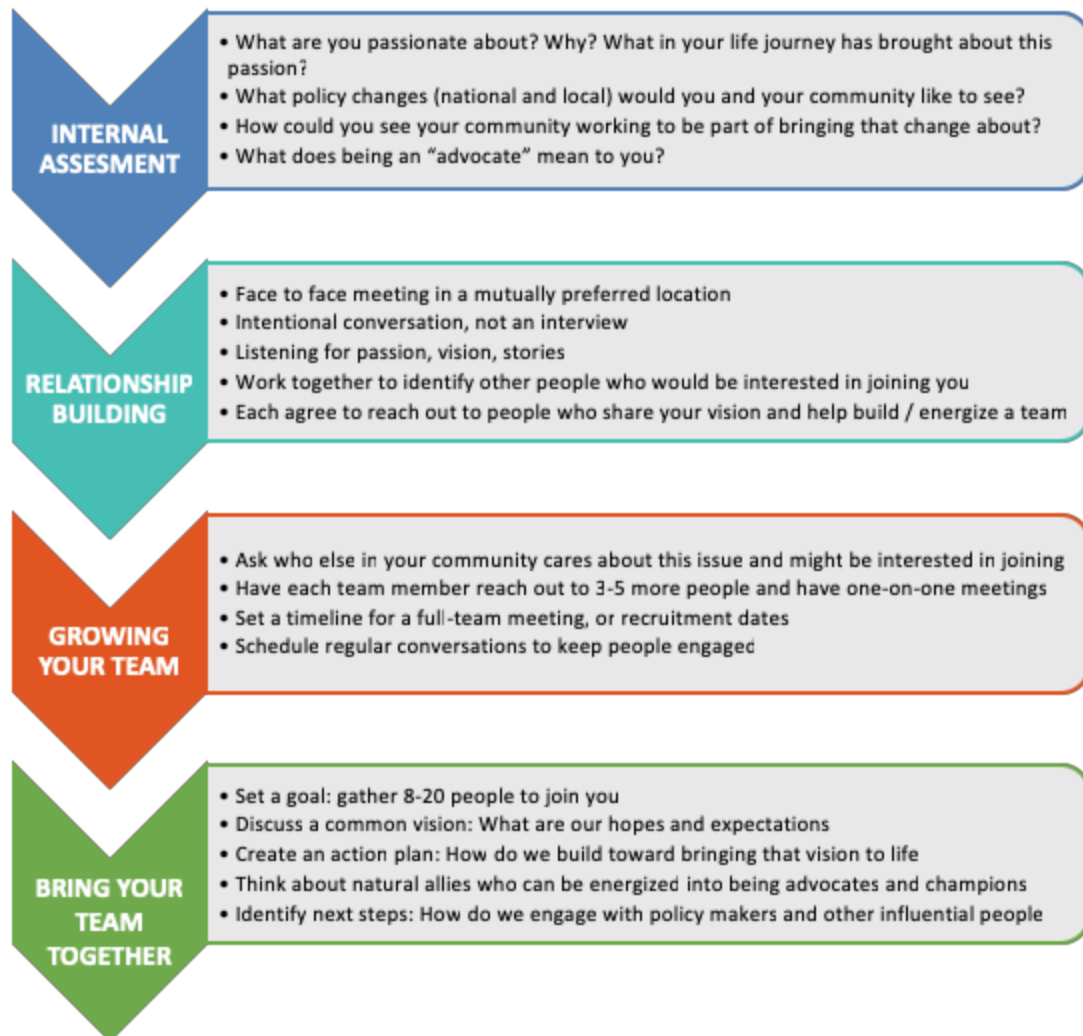
It is more important than ever to meet with your [local](#), [state](#), and [national](#) policy makers to educate them about the vital role that refugees and all newcomers play in your community. Because change takes time, meetings with policy makers should be viewed as part of a continuing process of sharing information, building relationships, and having refugees' perspectives genuinely considered when decisions are made that impact their lives. A good time to meet with your Members of Congress and/or their staff is during [Congressional recesses](#) when they are in their state and local offices. Schedules fill up quickly during these recess periods, so reach out to set up a meeting as soon as possible.

There are positive proposals that local elected officials can adopt to affirm the importance of resettlement and foster communities of welcome. City, municipal, and other local councils and commissions need to hear that their communities stand ready to welcome refugees. Urge your local leaders to adopt welcoming resolutions that extend hospitality to refugees and all newcomers. Click [here](#) to see a framework The United Methodist Church General Board of Church & Society developed to build and facilitate welcome.

Individuals who oppose refugee resettlement are making their voices heard loudly and frequently to policy makers. These groups utilize anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim rhetoric and draft legislation to engender fear and foster hostile atmospheres for newcomers. If we want policy makers to support positive legislation and oppose proposals that would turn our backs on refugees and violate our values of welcome and hospitality, then they need to hear from refugees and supportive community members.

Where to Start: Teambuilding

Team-building is an important component of advocacy. Team-building brings together diverse voices to speak to the importance of welcoming and helping refugees integrate and thrive from several perspectives. Having a team of refugee leaders, resettlement staff, volunteers, employers, faith groups, and other community members who meet regularly is essential to building meaningful relationships with policy makers. Below you'll find ideas on how you can start creating and sustaining your team of advocates.



For more information on how to engage in organizing and teambuilding, click [here](#).
Connect with refugee and immigrants' rights group near you: www.informedimmigrant.com/organizations/.

ACTION ALERT: Join National Call-in Day on Thursday, June 20th Tell Congress to Protect Refugees and Restore the Refugee Resettlement Program

Join us on **Thursday, June 20th** to tell your Members of Congress to **protect refugees and restore the refugee resettlement program**! Refugee leaders will be in Washington, DC that day to share their stories and why they care about refugee resettlement – please make your voice heard so that all Members of Congress hear loud and clear that their constituents care about refugees. The Trump **administration has reduced the refugee resettlement program by 75%** and set this year's refugee admissions goal at 30,000 – the lowest level in U.S. history. Given that there are more than 25 million refugees worldwide — more than half of whom are children — these numbers are shockingly low.

Join National Call-in on Thursday, June 20th: Call (866) 961-4293*

**Please call this line 3 times to be connected with your 1 Representative and 2 Senators*

Or you can [click here](#) to receive a phone call that connects you to your 2 Senators and 1 Representative

Sample Script: “I’m your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and [as a person of faith] I urge you to protect refugees & asylum seekers and to be bold in choosing moral, just policies that provide refuge for vulnerable individuals seeking protection. I call on you to:

- Hold the administration accountable to **meeting this year’s 30,000 refugee admissions goal** and urge them to commit to **resettling 95,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2020**, rebuilding the program and returning it to historic norms – and support the capacity and infrastructure of local communities to welcome refugees.
- **Co-sponsor the GRACE Act** (S.1088 and H.R.2146), which would set a minimum refugee admissions goal at 95,000 (the historic average since 1980).
- **Co-sponsor the NO BAN Act** (S.1123 and H.R.2214), which would end the harmful refugee, Muslim, and asylum bans put in place by this administration and establish vital protections against future discriminatory bans.
- Join the **bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus** (for Representatives only).

My community welcomes refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, and I urge you to do the same.”

Amplify on Social Media: Share this message with your [Senators & Representatives](#) on social media! [Click here](#) for RCUSA Advocacy Days Social Media Toolkit for sample posts, graphics, and more. For more information, [click here](#) for the RCUSA Advocacy Toolkit.

Your state and local leaders need to hear the same message. Tell them that your community welcomes refugees. To contact your state and local officials, visit: contactingcongress.org/local and usa.gov/elected-officials. To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

Follow [@RCUSA_DC](#) on Twitter and “like” [Refugee Council USA](#) on Facebook for up-to-date alerts.

Thank you for taking action, and please share with your networks!

Organize a Journey Sabbath

We invite people of all faiths to stand in solidarity with refugees by organizing a Journey Sabbath in June. The Journey Sabbath enlists churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship across the United States to dedicate time during or around their regular weekly worship service to a conversation about refugees and refugee resettlement. A Journey Sabbath dedicates time to having refugees share their stories and asking congregants to take action in support of refugee protection and resettlement. Make sure to put your event on the map at <https://www.weareallusa.org/events>.

Take a moment to reflect on your community's capacity, resources, and members. What type of Journey Sabbath event would animate both their passion for this subject and their best skillset? Here are some suggestions:

- Dedicate a worship service to having refugees share their stories
- Organize a vigil, march, or public demonstration
- Plan a press conference or visit to a local, state, or national politician
- Organize your congregation to volunteer for a local refugee resettlement office

Don't see an event you identify with on the list? Come up with your own! The next set of resources contains a sample agenda that can be adapted for any event, followed by tailored examples for specific events.

[SAMPLE] Journey Sabbath: Event Agenda [SAMPLE]

This is a general event agenda, **do not hesitate to modify it to fit your needs!** Feel free to get creative and include interpreters, music, poetry, skits when planning your agenda. Whatever you decide to do, it is recommended that several different people take different pieces of the agenda to encourage leadership, while a person designated as the chair opens and closes the event. Try to keep each speaker's time under five minutes. Make sure to practice the entire agenda at least once or twice, but don't be alarmed by any imperfections – they're what will make the event feel genuine, meaningful, and even sacred.

1. **Opening Prayer or Reflection** – Focus on the moral call to support refugees and refugee resettlement. Use this moment to tie our values and the prophetic voice to the work we are doing to support our refugee neighbors.
2. **Credential & Purpose** – Describe who you are, what you are doing, and why you've organized this event.
3. **Share Stories** – Have two or three refugees, family/friends, or allies (teachers, pastors, social workers etc.) briefly talk about their experiences. Make sure they understand the risks of sharing their stories with the public and take precautions to protect them if necessary (change their names or have friends or family members share their stories on their behalf). If no refugees feel comfortable speaking, ask for audience volunteers to read the stories within this packet aloud.
4. **Make an Ask** – This is when you ask the people with power (elected officials, institutional leaders, etc.) to take a specific action to support your cause. While this can be done without said person being present, you should always make an attempt to have them attend your event. In this case, it would be optimal to invite your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support refugee admissions and cosponsor the *GRACE Act* and *NO BAN Act*, but you could also invite city council members or state politicians to take action by urging the administration to resettle more refugees. Don't be afraid to think outside the box – university presidents, large business owners, and other powerful people are make great and influential allies. Their participation will produce more media and further public education on the issue.
5. **Call to Action** – Provide the next steps your community must take after the event. Suggestions include a sign onto a letter or petition, writing/calling/visiting their representatives, or even joining a refugee committee that will meet on a monthly basis. Even something as simple as encouraging everyone to sign up for action alerts via www.greeteras1.org is a good start.
6. **Closing Prayer and/or Reflection** – Repeat step one and thank everyone for coming.

While planning the event, don't forget to:

- Promote the event
- Put your event on the map!
<https://www.weareallusa.org/events>
- Estimate a headcount
- Invite local, state, and national policy makers
- Invite media outlets
- Consider the need for interpreters
- Confirm the location is accessible
- Choose the best date and time possible
- Offer food and beverages, if possible
- Rehearse
- Take photos
- Have someone cover the event on social media, via Facebook Live and Twitter
- Prepare quotes from speakers ahead of time so they can be shared with media immediately following the event

[SAMPLE] Journey Sabbath: Vigil Program [SAMPLE]

A vigil provides a time for quiet reflection and prayer, so it differs from the straightforward educational event/rally outlined in the previous sample. A vigil can be as simple as ten people gathered to pray for 20 minutes or as elaborate as a formal program with music and art. Below is one example of how a vigil may be organized, but your agenda may look different. Feel free to incorporate your church choir, local poets, sign language translator, or any other beautiful contributions your community has to offer.

1. **Welcome** — Describe who you are, what you are doing, and why you've organized this event.
2. **Song** — Ideally, you should choose a well-known song that conveys the sentiment of solidarity and compassion. You might invite a church choir or an instrumentalist to provide appropriate music or simply recruit a few strong singers to lead participants in singing.
3. **Reading** — Choose a reading that will help your community best connect with the refugee experience.
4. **Speaker** — Have a refugee or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader share their fears, hopes, and solidarity with refugees.
5. **Prayer** — Have one person, faith leader, or several lead a prayer according to their traditions. Involve vigil participants in praying a refrain throughout your prayer time. Consider offering prayers in multiple languages.
6. **Reprise Song**
7. **Speaker** — Have another refugee or ally; pastor, rabbi, imam or lay leader share their fears, hopes, and solidarity with refugees.
8. **Closing** — Reiterate the focus and purpose of your vigil: for Congress to hold the administration accountable to restore the refugee resettlement program to historic norms and protect refugees. At this time you might also invite vigil participants to join your group at a future event.

Foot Washing Ceremony

The root of religious feet washing are found in the hospitality customs of ancient civilizations, especially where sandals were worn. A host would provide water for guests to wash their feet, serve the guests by washing their feet, or provide a servant to wash the feet of the guests. This is mentioned in several places in sacred scripture for example as well as other religious and historical documents.

Holding a foot washing ceremony for refugees is a way to bring ritual symbolism to the street in a way that creates dramatic tension and ethical spectacle to show the solidarity that faith communities have with refugees.

Sample Program Outline:

- Welcome and Opening Prayer
- 3-4 Faith leaders speak on their support for refugees and refugee resettlement
- Scripture reading
- Introduction of the Foot Washing Ceremony

- Song
- Invite undocumented youth forward 2-3 at a time
- Closing Prayer

Sample Introduction to Ceremony

Israelites, wore sandals instead of shoes, and as they usually went barefoot in the house and an important duty of the host was to provide water and wash the guests feet, this is represented our sacred texts such as Genesis, Samuel, and Judges.

In the Christian tradition, Jesus washed his disciples feet as described in John 13:1-7. This was a powerful gesture to symbolically show that we should all serve one another and love one another. As this President has abdicated leadership to protect refugees, we as people of faith are calling on Congress, the administration, and the broader public to restore the refugee resettlement program and protect refugees. This foot washing is a celebration and call to service. It is a celebration because we believe that even though it looks like hope has been lost we will be victorious in the end. It is a call to service and advocacy alongside siblings in the refugee community.

Strategic Location

To raise the prophetic nature of this action, consider bringing this ceremony to the public square, which could be in front of the office of a Senator or Representative whose support we need to protect refugees.

Materials

2 chairs, 2 Towels, 2 Bowls, 2 pitchers filled with water

(the amount of materials will depend on the amount of people having their feet washed)

Sample Foot Washing Ceremony in Washington DC on Capitol Hill

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/clergy-wash-young-immigrants-feet-ask-congress-do-jesus-did-n801051>

How to Prepare & Organize Local Meetings With Policy Makers

Meet with your Members of Congress and/or their staff during Congressional recesses when they are in their state and local offices. Calendars of in-district time can be found [here](#).

STEP 1. Learn about your Elected Officials

- Are your Members of Congress in Congressional leadership, or on the [Senate](#) or [House](#) Appropriations Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Judiciary Committees; [Senate](#) or [House](#) Homeland Security Committees; or [Senate](#) or [House](#) Foreign Relations Committees? If so, they have jurisdiction over various aspects of the refugee program. Even if they aren't in leadership or on these committees, they can still be champions for refugees. To learn more about your governor, state legislators, mayor, and local officials, click [here](#).
- What have they said about refugees in the past? Has the member put out statements, authored op-eds, or been supportive of refugees? If they have, be sure to thank them and their staff. If they have a record of not supporting refugee resettlement, find out why. Have they cited reasons for not supporting the program? If so, build your talking points to address those concerns.
- What issues are of interest to them? Do they often speak out on certain issues? This can help you determine what approach to take when discussing refugees in your meeting. What did they do before they were elected to Congress? This can impact their perspective. It is your job as a successful advocate to discuss topics and frame issues in a way that will resonate with them.

STEP 2. Create an advocacy team: An ideal team consists of different stakeholder voices including refugees, case workers, faith leaders, business leaders, military veterans, and community leaders – all who can share in the planning, outreach, and coordination of visits and speak to the diversity of support for refugee resettlement.

STEP 3. Have a plan: Before the congressional visit, convene your advocacy team to assign roles:

- **The Facilitator:** This person starts the meeting, introduces the group, explains the purpose of the meeting, and provides time for each person to briefly introduce themselves and their organization and/or connection to refugees, to show that the group represents thousands of community members. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.
- **The Personal Story:** Storytelling is key to advocacy. A refugee should tell their story to show how people's lives are changed through refugee resettlement. Consider inviting a refugee who has been featured in a local news article, which can encourage policy makers to prioritize the meeting.
- **The Community Support:** Faith, business, employers, military, and community leaders briefly share how our refugees have contributed to the social, and economic fabric of their new community, and share concerns about negative policies.
- **Specific Issue Points:** It will be helpful to bring [handouts](#), information on refugees [by state](#) and [stories of welcome by state](#) - see the last page of this toolkit for additional resources.
- **The Ask:** The critical part when you make an ask, and wait for a response:
 - For Congress: "Will you hold the administration accountable to meeting the 30,000 resettlement goal they set for FY19, and setting a goal of 95,000 for FY20? Will you cosponsor the GRACE Act (S.1088 and H.R.2146) and the NO BAN Act? (S.1123 and H.R.2214)" *If they are a Representative, you can also urge them to join the Bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus.*
 - For State and Local Leaders: "Will you be a champion for refugee resettlement, oppose any and all anti-refugee proposals, and help us enact pro-refugee policies?" *See sample page 16.*

STEP 4. Debrief: It's important to debrief as a team in a separate location following the meeting. As a group, ask: What did we hear and learn? Did we get what we wanted? How did we work together as a team? What are the next steps? How can we engage this policy maker in the future, perhaps through event invitations, etc.? Share with your national advocacy staff (*contact information on last page*).

STEP 5. Follow-up: Always send a thank you email to the staff after the meeting. Reiterate the asks and send any information they asked for and any other information you think would be helpful. To maintain the relationship, you should invite the staff and/or the official to an upcoming event to meet with refugees.

Civic Engagement: Why It's Important and How to Host an Event

World Refugee Day is a great time to take one further step toward building welcoming communities that are inclusive and open to refugees, while also strengthening the ties within refugee communities. Integration is a key principle in our work, and this special day is an excellent opportunity to host an event!

Civic engagement refers to the ways in which individuals participate in the life of their communities. Many refugees and immigrants are very active in the civic life of their communities, and now the need for participation in broader civic institutions, voting, and influencing policy making is more important than ever. Civic engagement can mean anything, from voting and understanding policy issues that impact our lives, to educating and encouraging other individuals to vote and make their voices heard. It could even mean running for office! Civic engagement lifts up the voices and power of refugees and immigrants in our communities, thus educating policy makers and building champions across party lines at local, state, and national levels.

Civic engagement is a key component of integration: Voting and participating in civil society are key to the integration process. When immigrants and refugees become naturalized U.S. citizens and exercise their right to vote, they engage in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship, empowering themselves to be full members of their new communities.

Civic engagement is part of our mission to build welcoming communities: Refugees, resettlement offices, and supportive community members know first-hand the impact that policies have on the lives of refugees and their communities. It is critical for policy makers to meet refugees and understand their struggles, as well as see first hand the positive contributions that they make.

Civic engagement work is non-partisan, and does not endorse any candidate or political party: RCUSA members are 501(c)3 organizations that promote non-partisan civic engagement as part of our joint mission to lift up the voices of refugees and build stronger, more welcoming communities. Neither RCUSA nor its member organizations endorse any party or candidate. You should never mention a political party or candidate while registering people to vote.

Voter Registration in Your Community

An event that brings members of your community and refugees together provides a great opportunity to register naturalized citizens to vote. Have volunteers register new voters, distribute voter registration information, or early voting cards. Here is a voter registration table checklist:

- Voter registration cards, absentee and early voting ballots, with relevant information on each
- Clip boards, a visual flow chart on voter registration, and sample scripts for volunteers (see next page)
- [Commitment cards](#) asking people to promise to vote on election day and a volunteer sign-up sheet
- State voter information from your Election Office, including a map of jurisdictions & polling places
- Signs: "Register to Vote Here!" & "Voter registration available without regard for political preference"
- Tally sheet for reporting your activity at the end of the day

Know Your State Voting Laws: The best resource on your state's voting laws is your local county election board. There are Voter ID laws in 32 states, which can limit people's access to voting. Each state also has their own [early voting policies](#). It is important to know the laws in your state and communicate them in conversations with new voters. If your State has a [voting ID law](#), make sure you inform people so they can prepare to have the necessary identification when they vote.

Collaborate Locally: Registration forms and early voting applications can be picked up at your local board of elections office. Ask them if there are any rules about non-profits turning in registration cards or early ballot applications once they are filled out by new voters, as some election boards have deadlines or limits on the number of registration forms or applications turned in at once. Work with a local organization dedicated to voter registration to enter the information into the Voter Activation Network and follow up to ensure a successful voting experience.

Hello, I'm out registering people to vote today, my name is _____ with (Organization's name). Voting is one of the most important ways to add our voices to shape community and policy issues that impact our lives. Many refugees and immigrants first register at their naturalization ceremony.

Are you a U.S. citizen - have you had your ceremony yet?

Y
e
s

N
o

While you can't register to vote until you become a U.S. citizen, you can still be engaged. Would you like to sign up to volunteer on and leading up to election day?

Did you register to vote?

Y
e
s

N
o

Have you moved since you last voted? If so, you will have to update your address if you did.

It's simple to register to vote today, you just have to fill out this basic information with your name and address.

(They fill out the form)

Thanks! I will turn this to the Election Board and they will mail you more information.

Would you also like to sign up to volunteer to help get people to the polls on election day? (If so have them sign up on the volunteer sign up sheet)

Y
e
s

N
o

Have them fill out the registration form with their new address, then move to the last step to the right!

Sometimes when people register they don't actually make it out to vote, which is why we're asking people to sign up on the early voting / vote by mail list. The percentage of voting is much higher because you can vote from home or go to the polls on the weekend, rather than a workday, since elections are on a Tuesday. Do you want to sign up for early voting?

Lastly, I would ask you to commit to voting today. One way you can do that is by filling out this commitment card, so that we can follow up with you and remind you to vote as we get closer to the elections?

Invite Policy Makers to Greet Refugees at the Airport, Visit Refugee-Owned Businesses, Teach Civic Classes, or Officiate Citizenship Ceremonies

In order for policy makers to become champions for refugee resettlement, they need to meet refugees. By inviting policy makers to events where they can speak with refugees, witness how communities welcome refugees, and understand that refugees are their constituents, we can build support for resettlement.

Airport Welcomes: Welcoming refugees at the airport when they first arrive in the United States is a powerful experience. Those present can see the hope in refugees' eyes as they begin their new lives in America, and in many cases, the embrace of family members reunited after enduring the pain of separation. Community members are often present with balloons and welcome signs, having prepared a hot meal and furnished the apartment for the refugee family. This is a perfect event to invite local, state, and national policy makers to attend. Here are some steps that can help you set up such an event:

1. Work with your local refugee resettlement office to brainstorm the best way to make this work well.
2. Start a conversation with your policy maker's office ahead of time to give them a sense of what to expect. How long are they likely to wait at the airport? What opportunities will there be to speak with volunteers and a refugee? If needed, will a translator be available? Will there be a gathering with food afterwards?
3. Think through whether or not you want media present or if you can permit the policy maker's office to cover the event on social media or for their newsletters, as some refugee families may not want press coverage of their arrival. It is always important to prioritize refugees' safety and ensure they are comfortable.
4. Get the best contact information for the staff who handles their schedule, so that you can easily let them know when you are expecting refugee arrivals. Then you can be in touch with them and let them know when you are expecting to welcome a refugee family. Schedules may not always align, but if they know to expect your calls when refugees are set to arrive, a date will work out at some point.

Visit Refugee-Owned Businesses: Policy makers love to visit local businesses. By inviting them to visit a refugee-owned business, you can help them understand how refugees contribute to the local economy. Work with a refugee business owner to invite a policy maker to visit their business. Find a time that works for everyone, seeing that refugees and supportive community members can attend as well. Make sure the event is well organized, so that the policy maker can get to know refugees and community supporters in a short period of time. Talk with the business owner and policy maker about media and social media opportunities so that the visit can help educate the broader public. Ask the policy maker to make a short speech during the visit - this will give them a chance to commit to being a champion for refugees.

Teach English, Civics, and Citizenship Classes: Local resettlement offices, libraries, colleges, and other non-profit organizations help refugees and immigrants practice their English skills, learn about life in the United States and U.S. history, and prepare to take the citizenship exam. By inviting policy makers and/or their staff to serve as guest teachers or speakers for these classes, you can simultaneously include them in the resettlement process, help them meet and learn about refugees, and let refugees know that their government officials are accessible and care about them. Policy makers and their staff tend to be knowledgeable and passionate about U.S. history, civics, and citizenship, and well placed to help teach such classes.

Officiate Citizenship Ceremonies: Swearing in new U.S. citizens is a powerful experience for policy makers, as it helps them reflect on America's best ideals. Seeing the excitement on new citizens' faces can help policy makers understand the importance of refugee resettlement. You can work with your local U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office and/or local courthouse to help plan a naturalization oath ceremony. Find your local contacts at www.uscis.gov/about-us/find-uscis-office/field-offices and www.uscourts.gov, and resources at www.uscis.gov/policymanual/HTML/PolicyManual-Volume12-PartJ-Chapter5.html. Work with soon-to-be-citizens who are willing to share their stories to prepare for conversations with policy makers and media interviews, and to utilize social media to educate the broader community about refugees and immigrants who are becoming U.S. citizens.

World Refugee Day: Media & Outreach Resources

Writing & Pitching Your Event and Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

When drafting an opinion piece, research the outlet you are submitting to. Many have a word limit around 600, but please check the outlet's website for guidance. Please feel free to use the points in the draft op-ed below as you write your own opinion article, or feel free to write directly from the heart - what you have to say deserves to be heard!

When pitching your event, op-ed, or other welcoming project, it is important to keep your pitch short and on message. Most editors and outlets prefer pitches over email or through a submission form on their website. It is important to keep your pitch as short as possible, as reporters are often on a deadline and receive many story pitches every day. Open your pitch with an interesting first line and relate the pitch back to another story the reporter has recently written to increase the likelihood of the reporter picking up your story. Please see the draft pitch below for an example email.

To further increase your chances of the media covering your story, set up an exclusive interview with an outlet for attendees at your event. Making your event exclusive to one reporter makes it more appealing to the journalist and outlet as they will be the first ones to "break" the story that ties into current events at a local level. When pitching an exclusive story, be sure to research the outlets and reporters in your area. Who are the top current event, immigration, or political reporters in your area? Have they written about refugees before? If so, how can you tie your event into their previous work? Answering these questions and using them to draft your pitch will help increase the chances of your welcoming event being covered and featured as an exclusive in a larger outlet.

Draft Pitch Email for Media Invitation and Follow Up from Advisory

Hello,

I hope you are well! I wanted to let you know of a potential story opportunity in regards to refugee resettlement in CITY/STATE. On DATE, ORGANIZATION will host a [EVENT TYPE, ie: welcoming dinner] with refugees from COUNTRIES. Joining together in a meal/discussion, community leaders including LIST, will join refugees to create a welcoming community and discuss refugee resettlement.

We would like to highlight the human stories behind the resettlement program, particularly how families and faith communities are impacted by the political debate and various policy proposals. Given your past articles highlighting refugees/immigrants, I would love to offer you an exclusive interview with the group next DATE if you are interested.

I have attached the invitation flyer to this email with a full list of individuals in the group, but please let me know if you are interested or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
NAME

Draft Pitch Email for Op-Ed

Dear Editor,

As the global community faces the largest displacement crisis in history, our organization/congregation is preparing to resettle refugees and do our part to create a welcoming community. Serving as a leader with ORGANIZATION, I had the unique opportunity to host/attend EVENT, (include brief details).

The event inspired me to author the attached op-ed, detailing my experience and reaffirming the need for us all to work together and create an inclusive community. In light of recent anti-Muslim rhetoric in particular, this piece offers a timely response and highlights the urgent need to create a welcoming place for all people.

Please feel free to contact me at EMAIL or over the phone at PHONE NUMBER if you have any questions or would like to discuss the piece in greater detail. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,
NAME

Sample World Refugee Day Faith Leader Op-Ed

Welcoming Refugees: It's a Matter of Faith

On World Refugee Day, I reflect how from the earliest days of [Sunday school/Hebrew School/Seminary], my faith has taught and called me to welcome the stranger, stand with the vulnerable, and love my neighbor. Now, as a **father, minister, and [Tennessean]**, I am proud to demonstrate these values in my daily life and weekly sermons at **[name of congregation]**. But it is also because of those values that I am deeply disturbed by recent anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment espoused by some of our lawmakers. It sends an unwelcoming and mean-spirited message of exclusion to refugee families fleeing violence and persecution.

Last year, **[INSERT STATE CONTEXT]**. This **[BILL, RESOLUTION, PROPOSAL]**, as well as the recent executive order to stop refugee resettlement stands opposite to my beliefs as a person of faith. Refugees are also the most scrutinized individuals entering the United States. To claim that they are security threats to our community not only ignores the unimaginable circumstances they flee and heavily scrutinized path to safe haven in the United States, but also stokes fear rather than cultivating compassion, truth, and understanding.

[INSERT RELEVANT SCRIPTURE – EX: “Bring water to the thirsty, meet the fugitive with bread... For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the stress of battle.” - Isaiah 21:14-15; “And (as for) those who believed and fled and struggled hard in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and helped, these are the believers truly; they shall have forgiveness and honorable provision.” (Quran 8:74); “And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 10:19)]

From the [earliest books] in the **[Bible/Torah/Quran]**, our faith calls on us to show mercy and hospitality to those fleeing persecution. We are called to treat them with dignity, respect, and love, providing the same welcome that we ourselves would hope for. As Americans, we live in a country built in part by the hard work, dreams, and determination of generations of immigrants and refugees -- many of whom were our ancestors. Sadly, it seems that our state legislators have forgotten these lessons and have acted with fear instead of compassion.

Refugees are mothers, fathers, and children. They are doctors, teachers, lawyers, business owners, craftsmen, and musicians. As the world searches for solutions to the largest displacement crisis in history, with more than 21 million refugees worldwide, we have a moral and legal obligation to refugees seeking a chance to rebuild their lives and create a better future for their families. These people are no different than our **[Biblical]** ancestors who were once refugees who found welcome and were called to do the same.

Today, on World Refugee Day, I urge our state lawmakers to ensure **[Tennessee]** is providing refugees a chance to live, work, and go to school in safety. To do otherwise would be to dishonor our legacy of welcome and hospitality and fall short of our values.

Sample World Refugee Day Refugee Leader Op-Ed

World Refugee Day 2019: OpEd Template for Refugee Leaders

In XXXX (year) I was forced to leave [INSERT COUNTRY] because of [INSERT DETAILS OF PERSECUTION OR THREAT, OTHER DETAILS OF YOUR JOURNEY].

My personal story is unique, but my situation is shared by countless others who have also experienced unimaginable loss and tragedy. It is also a story of community – not just of the refugee community but of the community here in [INSERT LOCATION] and others across the U.S. that made the choice to welcome me to my new home.

I'm forever grateful to the U.S. Refugee Resettlement program and [INSERT CITY] that gave me a second chance. [INSERT DETAILS ABOUT ARRIVAL YEAR OR ANY OTHER PERSONAL DETAILS. What was it like when you arrived? What do you remember thinking, feeling? What are you most thankful for?]. Through resettlement, I was able to rebuild my life and give back to my community.

As World Refugee Day approaches--a day when we celebrate the contributions refugees make to our communities, I'm inspired by ways that Americans are choosing to support families like mine. We did not choose to become refugees, but these Americans have chosen to welcome us.

Take for instance the Ration Challenge, launched in the U.S. for the first time this year. More than 10,000 ordinary Americans are taking on the challenge of eating only refugee rations--just a small amount of rice, flour, beans, fish and oil-- this entire week to bring awareness to the refugee crisis and raise funds to support refugee families around the world.

The compassion and commitment that these Ration Challenge participants are showing is profound. At a moment when less than 1 percent of refugees find safety through resettlement, regular people are stepping in. They are choosing to donate their own time and money to help families who may never get the home they deserve.

Unfortunately, our government's policies towards refugees does not reflect the compassion and generosity that American communities have for refugee families. The U.S. used to be a leader on the global stage in efforts to remedy refugee crises. The refugee resettlement program that saved my life and countless others has been cut by 75% during the last two years. At the same time refugees who arrive at the border to seek safety are being subjected to further trauma and finding their chances of protection increasingly slim. **The welcome mat at America's doorstep is getting smaller and smaller, and may soon disappear {insert other comparison/metaphor of choice.. statue of liberty, door shutting, etc}**

America is better than this. I know from experience.

[STATE AFFILIATION E.G. TENNESSEANS] are empathetic and gave me a new life. **[INSERT Anecdote about how you were welcomed by the community]**. That's why I'm raising my voice to support the rights of refugees through my work as **[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT WORK, ACTIVISM, VOLUNTEERISM]**.

There are thousands of other former refugees just like me all across the country working to make their communities better for everyone. They are police officers, teachers, doctors, business owners, elected officials and community organizers. They are at once inspiring and ordinary, the kind of citizens this country needs.

This World Refugee Day, as we celebrate refugees in our community of {city name}, we must demand that our elected leaders do the same. Congress must rebuild the refugee resettlement program and protect the right to seek asylum. Our communities and our nation will be made more prosperous and strong when we can restore policies that reflect our values and honor our promises to the thousands of refugee families who are looking for a safe place to call home.

Exclusive Videos for Social Media / Screening

RCUSA Members and Supporting Organizations have an exclusive opportunity to share these never-before-seen video clips about why communities in the US welcome refugees!

Please share these videos with a link to www.rcusa.org/volunteer to encourage broad engagement!

Faith-Perspective video on why communities welcome refugees:
[Short refugee welcome video 1](#)

Short 2-minute video about why communities welcome refugees:

- [Short refugee welcome video 2](#)

Longer-form video on promoting community welcome of refugees:

- [Long refugee welcome video](#)



Social Media: 2019 World Refugee Day Posts & Graphics

- [Immigrant Heritage Month graphics](#)

Elected Officials

- [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.], [name of *my community*] stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome
- Thanks, [Senator, Representative, Governor, etc.] for your support of #refugees and policies that welcomes them to our communities! #WRD2019 #RefugeesWelcome

Legislation:

- Choose to give #GRACE and renew America's humanitarian standards! #EnactGRACE so that more #Refugees can find safety #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2019
- [Organization's name] Calls on our elected officials to #EnactGRACEA and allow us to #WelcomeRefugees
- My Community in [Insert city/town name] supports the #GRACEAct which will hold the Administration accountable to #Welcome95k #Refugees a year. #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2019

Contributions and Benefits of Refugees in Our Communities

- We say #RefugeesWelcome in my [city] community by [action]. #WRD2019
- [Name of group, family, etc.] is ready to welcome #refugees! #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2019 (insert photo)
- My community is better with refugees. They [pay taxes, create jobs, start businesses, bring cultural diversity, open restaurants, etc.]. #WRD2019 #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2019, we celebrate the diversity and resiliency #refugees bring to our communities! #RefugeesWelcome
- Refugee [#resettlement](#) means not only saving lives, but also successful integration for [#refugees](#) in communities across the US. [#WRD2019](#)
- Making #RefugeesWelcome involves teamwork! NGOs, faith communities, community groups & others all chip in. #WRD2019
- [#Refugees](#) who get tools they need to succeed add real value to our communities as hard working tax payers [#WRD2019](#)
- Refugees across the US add value: working, learning English, paying taxes, opening businesses & becoming citizens. #WRD201 #RefugeesWelcome
- Entire communities benefit from refugees, especially when we invest in welcoming early on, equipping them to thrive. #WRD2019
- Every year, [#refugees](#) open businesses, revitalize towns, become citizens & give back to the communities that welcomed them. [#WRD2019](#)
- #Refugees bring their resiliency & experiences to help make our communities better. We celebrate them this #WRD2019! #RefugeesWelcome
- This #WRD2019, join us in creating welcoming communities for all – join the #RefugeesWelcome initiative today! Visit refugeesarewelcome.org
- Want to help celebrate #WRD2019? Join the #RefugeesWelcome initiative & help welcome #refugees in your area! Visit refugeesarewelcome.org
- As we celebrate #WRD2019, join us in making sure the US continues its welcoming legacy and resettles #refugees. #RefugeesWelcome

Refugee Facts

- FACT: 52% of #refugees are under the age of 18. What if that was someone you know? #WRD2019
- 44,400 people a day are forced to flee their homes because of conflict & persecution. #WRD2019
- The number of #refugees and others forcibly displaced from their homes is over 68 million worldwide, the highest level since WWII [#WRD2019](#)
- Every minute, 24 people are forced to flee their homes because of war or persecution. #RefugeesWelcome #WRD2019
- The US has been a global leader in the protection of refugees and must continue to set an example as a safe haven. #WRD2018 #RefugeesWelcome
- Since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, over 3 million [#refugees](#) have found safe haven in America. [#RefugeesWelcome](#) [#WRD2019](#)
- DID YOU KNOW: Less than 1% of the world's [#refugees](#) are ever resettled. [#WRD2019](#)
- The US Refugee Resettlement Program is a lifesaving, public-private partnership for #refugees with no other means of finding safety. #WRD2019
- Fewer than 1% of the world's 25.4 million refugees will be resettled. #WRD2019
- #Refugees from all over the world do whatever it takes to try to bring their families to safety, often risking their lives. #WRD2019
- FACT: There are over 5 million #SyrianRefugees, mostly in #Turkey, but so many in Lebanon that 1 in 5 people there is a refugee. #WRD2019
- Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, & Jordan are the top #refugee hosting countries. #WRD2019

Please click [here](#) for more sample social media posts.

Talking Points: Refugee Resettlement & Access to Asylum

Resettlement is a refugee's last option for safety:

- Today, we are facing the worst refugee crisis in recorded history. There are over 68 million displaced people in the world, 25 million of which are refugees, half of whom are children.
- Resettlement is the last resort, when refugees cannot safely return to their home country and when they cannot safely remain in the country to which they initially fled. Refugee resettlement is a life-saving program available to less than 1% of refugees.
- To be considered for resettlement, a refugee must first receive a refugee status determination by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) by proving they are fleeing persecution based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, political opinion, or social group. UNHCR then refers refugees to one of 37 resettlement countries, one of which is the U.S.
- Since the creation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, the U.S. has set an average admissions goal of 95,000 annually. The U.S. resettled less than half of FY18's then-historic low refugee admissions goal of 45,000. We are on track to resettle around 22,000 refugees this year, less than FY19's new historic-low admissions goal of 30,000. We call on the administration to at least meet its FY 19 refugee admissions goal of 30,000 - and to set an admissions goal of 95,000 refugees in FY 20.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is critical to U.S. foreign policy & national security objectives:

- Refugees are the most vetted individuals entering the United States, and undergo complex security checks through the DHS, DOD, FBI, State Department, and a number of U.S. intelligence agencies.
- The U.S. must maintain its commitment to resettle refugees and encourage other countries to do the same, as resettlement is a critical tool to alleviate regional instability, maintain relationships with important allies, and advance our national security and foreign policy interests.
- National security experts agree: refugee resettlement advances our national security interests and contributes to keeping our troops safe around the world. Resettling refugees is tangible proof that the U.S. is a beacon of inclusion and debunks the anti-American narratives of terrorist propaganda.
- The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program allows the U.S. to resettle Afghans who had worked for the U.S. government in Afghanistan and whose lives were threatened because of their work in support of the U.S. mission. As U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan continues, we cannot complete our mission there without the Afghan translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, cultural advisors, and soldiers who stand by us. Protecting our allies is vital to maintaining support of the Afghan people and to completing our mission there and to for future wars in which we may be engaged.

Refugees positively impact their new communities:

- Refugees give back to their new communities. They start working as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, and become active members of society.
- The average workforce participation rate of refugees is 81.8%, above the national 62%.
- 13% of refugees were entrepreneurs in 2015, compared to just 9% percent of the U.S.-born.
- 40% of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by refugees, immigrants or their children.

U.S. communities support refugee resettlement and want to see it restored to historic norms:

- Communities across the country support refugees. Faith leaders, educators, business leaders, and local, state, and national elected officials, as well as thousands of community members have demonstrated welcome for refugees in every state.
- We urge policy makers to hold the administration accountable to meeting the 30,000 resettlement goal it set for FY19 - already an historic low - and to resettling 95,000 refugees in FY20.
- The *GRACE Act*, S.1088 & H.R.2146, would set a minimum refugee admissions goal of 95,000 each year, which is the average goal set between 1980 and 2017. It also mandates quarterly reports on refugee admissions, increasing accountability.
- The *NO BAN Act*, S.1123 & H.R.2214, would repeal the Muslim bans, refugee bans, and asylum ban, and prevent the administration from setting such bans in the future.
- The bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus is led by Reps. Lofgren (D-CA), Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Neguse (D-CO), Chris Smith (R-NJ). House offices can join by emailing rachel.calanni@mail.house.gov.

Sample World Refugee Day Flyer

WORLD REFUGEE DAY THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 2019

Today we celebrate refugees' courage in overcoming adversity and the many gifts they bring to our communities and mourn prolonged family separation and refugees who remain overseas. As refugees and friends of refugees, we know the challenges newcomers face and the need for improved policies to help refugees rebuild their lives in the United States. We also stand in solidarity with 25+ million refugees all over the world who are in dire need of assistance.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE by letting our local, state, and national leaders know that we support protections for refugees and the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Our elected officials are making decisions that will impact the lives of refugees both in the United States and internationally. Please call your Senators and Representative and urge them to reflect the welcome you see in your community by supporting protection and resettlement for refugees – regardless of where they come from or what religion they practice.



Tell Congress to Welcome Refugees: (866) 961-4293

Please call 3 times to be connected with your two Senators and your Representative.

Share This Message with Your State and Local Officials!

Contact information available at: contactingcongress.org/local and usa.gov/elected-officials.

Here's an example of what to say: "I'm your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and [as a person of faith] I urge you to protect refugees & asylum seekers and to be bold in choosing moral, just policies that provide refuge for vulnerable individuals seeking protection. I call on you to:

- Hold the administration accountable to **meeting this year's 30,000 refugee admissions goal** and urge them to commit to **resettling 95,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2020**, rebuilding the program and returning it to historic norms .
- **Co-sponsor the GRACE Act** (S.1088 and H.R.2146).
- **Co-sponsor the NO BAN Act** (S.1123 and H.R.2214).
- Join the **bipartisan Congressional Refugee Caucus** (for Representatives only).

My community welcomes refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, and I urge you to do the same."

You can also tweet your policy makers: ".@SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE, my community stands #WithRefugees! Show that #AmericaWelcomes by supporting U.S. refugee resettlement! #RefugeesWelcome #GreaterAs1"

For questions and more information, contact [ORGANIZATION'S ADVOCACY STAFF]

Sample Letters to Policy Makers

Sample Letter to Send to your Members of Congress

[DATE]

The Honorable [SENATOR / REPRESENTATIVE NAME] (Find at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov)
[ROOM NUMBER] [NAME OF CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING]
WASHINGTON, DC [20510/20515]

Dear [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE] [LAST NAME]:

As your constituent, I urge you to protect and rebuild the refugee resettlement program. It is critical that Congress holds the administration accountable to meeting this year's refugee admissions goal of 30,000 - already a historic low - and to setting a goal of 95,000 refugees in FY 2020. I also call on you to do everything in your power to protect asylum seekers and prevent the administration from returning people seeking protection back into harm's way.

Over 68 million people are displaced globally, including over 25 million refugees, the largest number in recorded history. Congress must provide oversight to ensure that the administration operates the resettlement program in good faith. By definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Resettlement is the last option for safety for refugees who cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a private/public partnership that was started by congregations and communities across the United States and is integral to U.S. foreign policy objectives. Before refugees enter the United States, they undergo rigorous security screenings, including biometric checks and interviews with specialized and well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers.

[LOCAL AGENCY NAME] helps refugees who have been resettled in [STATE] by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, community orientation, English-language classes, and job placement. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY]** Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and are productive members of the communities that welcomed them.

Refugees are a testament to the United States' long, proud history as a beacon of hope for those who seek lives free from violence and oppression. I call on you to do everything in your power to hold the administration accountable to meeting this year's refugee admissions goal of 30,000 and resettling 95,000 refugees in fiscal year 2020. I also urge you to protect asylum seekers see that the administration does not dismantle their access to protection. I invite you to meet with refugees next time you're back home. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions.

With Appreciation,

[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

Sample Letter to Send to Your State and Local Leaders

[DATE]

[TITLE & NAME] *(Find governors, state legislators, mayor & local officials: www.usa.gov/elected-officials)*

[ROOM NUMBER] [NAME OF OFFICE BUILDING]

[CITY, STATE ZIP CODE]

Dear **[TITLE & LAST NAME]**:

As your constituent from **[CITY, STATE]**, I urge you to welcome refugees, support the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and asylum system, and declare our **[CITY/COUNTY/STATE]** a “Welcoming City.” I would also urge you to write the White House and State Department to show your support for resettlement. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, more community members than ever before are volunteering with resettlement offices around the country to help refugees integrate and thrive.

The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led humanitarian assistance efforts to help displaced persons, including resettling Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. During the Cold War period, the U.S. welcomed refugees from Vietnam, Cuba and the former Soviet Union. Today, we resettle Darfuri refugees who have fled genocide, Bhutanese refugees forced out of their country, Syrian refugees who have fled human rights atrocities, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served alongside the U.S. military, and other populations in need of lifesaving protection. Refugee resettlement is a public / private partnership that celebrates the hospitality, resilience, and freedom that our communities hold dear.

By definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Resettlement is the last option for safety for refugees who cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled. Before refugees enter the United States, they undergo rigorous security screenings, including biometric checks and interviews with specialized and well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers.

[LOCAL AGENCY NAME] helps refugees who have been resettled in **[STATE]** by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, community orientation, English-language classes, and job placement. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY]** Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and are productive members of our community.

Our **[CITY/COUNTY/STATE]** is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to its economic strength and cultural richness. We have been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to newcomers, where the contributions of all are celebrated and valued. As cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, we urge you to adopt a resolution declaring **[CITY/COUNTY/STATE]** a welcoming one in which all are accepted and appreciated.

Please stand with us as we welcome refugees and affirm the importance of resettlement and asylum. We invite you to come visit our office and meet with refugees **[perhaps include event information]**. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me about how we can be supportive of moving a welcoming resolution forward.

With appreciation,

[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

Draft Letters for Local Officials to Send the White House & State Department*

[DATE]

Dear President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo:

Welcoming refugees shines a light on Americans' most cherished common values. As a community in **[CITY, STATE]**, we believe in the strength of the U.S. refugee resettlement program and welcome refugees from all backgrounds, faiths, and countries of origin. This commitment reflects a core American belief in the dignity of every person, lifts up diversity as a community's strength, and cultivates an environment of inclusion. Resettlement is a strong American legacy that extends hospitality and offers a chance for refugees to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Every day, our community members are volunteering with resettlement offices to help refugees integrate and thrive.

Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to "welcome the stranger," a bedrock upon which much of America's strength rests. Communities of faith stand in partnership to help refugees find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. The United States has a long history of providing protection to persons seeking safety from persecution. In our community, we have welcomed refugees from **[DESCRIBE WHERE REFUGEES IN YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE COME FROM, THEIR PAST STRUGGLES AND CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS.]**

By definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Resettlement is the last option for safety for refugees who cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled. Before refugees enter the United States, they undergo rigorous security screenings, including biometric checks and interviews with specialized and well-trained Department of Homeland Security officers.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a prime example of a public-private partnership between the federal government, the state government, local non-profit organizations, and volunteers. **[LOCAL AGENCY NAME]** helps refugees who have been resettled in **[STATE]** by providing them with the tools of self-reliance: housing, community orientation, English-language classes, and job placement. Refugees are resilient, hard workers whose innovative skills have contributed greatly to our state. **[DESCRIBE POSITIVE IMPACTS REFUGEES HAVE ON YOUR COMMUNITY]** Refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and are productive members of our community.

Please stand with our community as we welcome refugees. We invite you to come visit us and meet with refugees **[PERHAPS INCLUDE EVENT INFORMATION]**. Thank you for your public service, and please contact me if you have any questions about refugee resettlement in our area.

With appreciation,

[YOUR SIGNATURE AND CONTACT INFORMATION]

**Your local policy makers can send their letters to their contacts at the White House and State Department. Encourage them to also send the letter to your Senators and Representative, and also please share a copy with your agency's advocacy staff (contact information on last page), so we can see how many have been sent and ensure that Administration officials and members of congress see them.*

Sample Local Welcome Resolution

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CITY/COUNTY OF **[NAME]** AS A WELCOMING **[CITY/COUNTY]** THAT CELEBRATES THE GROWING DIVERSITY OF ITS RESIDENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND ALL NEWCOMERS ENHANCE THE CULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

WHEREAS, more than 68 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including over 25 million refugees;

WHEREAS, by definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

WHEREAS, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when refugees cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled due to lack of access to safety, shelter, health care, education, or protection;

WHEREAS, resettlement to the U.S. is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection – such as unaccompanied and other at-risk children, female-headed households, victims of torture, the physically disabled, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country (for example, religious minorities or LGBTI individuals) – and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community;

WHEREAS, organizations responsible for resettling refugees in our community, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in **[CITY]**;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** has been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where the contributions of all are celebrated and valued;

WHEREAS, cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, joining a national movement for creating an inclusive community;

WHEREAS, residents of **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** aspire to live up to our highest societal values of acceptance and equality, and treat newcomers with decency and respect, creating a vibrant community for all to live in;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE **[CITY/COUNTY]** OF **[NAME]**, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is hereby declared a Welcoming City, and one that affirms the beauty and richness of our diversity, and one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** hereby urges other local and state communities to join us in a stronger national effort to resettle the most vulnerable refugees worldwide and help them integrate and thrive.

Adopted this the X day of **[MONTH YEAR]**.

Advocacy Resources & Contact Information for Advocacy Staff

Advocacy Materials

- Click [here](#) for refugee 101, national security, executive order, and other important resources.

National Sign On Letters Demonstrating Commitment to Refugees

- Letter from 5,000+ religious leaders in support of resettling refugees of all faiths: www.interfaithimmigration.org/5000religiousleaderletter
- Letter from the Evangelical Immigration Table in support of refugee resettlement: <http://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/cms/assets/uploads/2015/12/EIT-Syrian-refugee-letter.pdf>
- Letter from more than 1,000 rabbis calling on elected leadership to support refugee resettlement: www.hias.org/sites/default/files/1000_rabbis_support_refugees_160115.pdf
- Letter from 4,000 + Catholic sisters, priests, and brothers in support of resettling refugees of all faiths: <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/news/catholic-religious-sign-letter-support-refugee-resettlement/>
- Former National Security Officials Statement on America's Commitment to Refugees: www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/STATEMENT-ON-AMERICAS-COMMITMENT-TO-REFUGEES.pdf

State-by-State Resources

- RCUSA State Profiles on Refugee Resettlement: www.rcusa.org/state-refugee-profiles
- Interfaith Immigration Coalition State-by-State Articles and Demonstrations of Welcome: www.interfaithimmigration.org/2015/12/03/welcoming-refugees-state-by-state-resources/

Additional Advocacy Toolkits

- Interfaith Immigration Coalition Neighbor-to-Neighbor Toolkit: www.interfaithimmigration.org/neighbor
- Refugees Welcome Toolkit: www.refugeesarewelcome.org/refugees-welcome-toolkit_final-8-5-16/
- My Neighbor is Muslim Toolkit: <http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>
- RCUSA 116th Congress Toolkit: <http://rcusa.org/advocate-now>

The following advocacy staff represent organizations working with refugees:

- Church World Service: Jen Smyers, jsmyers@cwsglobal.org
- Episcopal Migration Ministries: Lacy Broemel, lbroemel@episcopalchurch.org
- HIAS: Liz Mandelman, elizabeth.mandelman@hias.org
- International Rescue Committee: Kristen Aster, kristen.aster@rescue.org
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: Diana Guelespe, DGuelespe@lirs.org
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Matt Wilch, mwilch@usccb.org
- U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants: Esmeralda Lopez, elopez@uscridc.org
- Ethiopian Community Development Council: Nezia Kubwayo, Nkubwayo@ecdacus.org
- World Relief: Jenny Yang, jgyang@worldrelief.org
- Refugee Council USA: Danielle Grigsby, dgrigsby@rcusa.org